

In Paragraph [0018], the paragraph has been amended as follows:

[-]Fig. 3 is a [simplified front] front plan view of the input station of the device of Fig. 1, representing certain parts of the [invention,] invention.

In Paragraph [0019], the paragraph has been amended as follows:

[-]Figs. 4a and 4b are side plan views of the input station of the device of Fig. 1, illustrated in two different conditions, some of the parts being shown in [transparency,] transparency.

In Paragraph [0020], the paragraph has been amended as follows:

[-]Fig. 5 [reproduces] is another schematic view of Fig. 3, showing other parts of the [invention,] invention.

In Paragraph [0021], the paragraph has been amended as follows:

[-]Fig. 6 is a top view of the output station of the device of Fig. [1,] 1.

In Paragraph [0022], the paragraph has been amended as follows:

[-]Fig. 7 is a top view illustrating the operating principle of the means shown in Fig. 6.

IN THE CLAIMS

In Claim 1, the claim has been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) Process for the on-line storage of sets (2) of flat products (1) such as, in particular, disposable liners or sanitary napkins, [in which] comprising transporting said products [are transported] between one or more input stations (3) and one or more output stations (4) [and in which:];

[-] introducing said sets [are introduced] at a given arrival rate at said input station or stations (3) between pressing means (6), capable of moving with said sets, said pressing means (6) being in a first, so-called open, configuration,

[-] pressing said products [are pressed] against one another by causing said pressing means (6) to change over from their open configuration to a second, so-called product holding, configuration, and

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[-] directing said sets [are directed] towards said output station or stations (4) at which they are ejected, at a given output rate, adapted as a function of the input rate, to manage an accumulation of sets between said input station or stations (3) and said output station or stations (4).

In Claim 3, the claim has been amended as follows:

3. (Amended) Process according to [claims 1 or 2, in which] Claim 1, wherein said sets are caused to travel between said input station or stations (3) and said output station or stations (4) along a path the length of which is variable as a function of the input and/or output rate, to manage said accumulation.

In Claim 4, the claim has been amended as follows:

4. (Amended) Process according to [any one of claims 1 to 3, in which there is provided] Claim 1, further comprising a stream of sets of variable size and said holding configuration [is] being adapted according to the size of the sets to be conveyed.

In Claim 5, the claim has been amended as follows:

5. (Amended) Device for the on-line storage of sets of flat products such as, in particular, disposable liners or periodic napkins, [including] comprising one or more input stations (3) [and], one or more output stations (4), [as well as] means (8) for conveying said sets between said input station or stations (3) and said output station or stations (4), [said device further including :]

[-] pressing means (6), capable of moving with said set conveying means (8), said pressing means (6) being capable of changing over from a first, so-called open, configuration, permitting [the] introduction of the sets into said conveying means (8) at a given input rate, to a second, or so-called product holding configuration, in which the products are pressed against one another,

[-] means (10) [or] for causing said pressing means (6) to change over from their open configuration to their product holding configuration, provided at said input station or stations,

[-] means (7) for ejecting the sets, provided at said output station or stations for the departure of the sets at a given output rate, and

[-] means (9) for generating an accumulation of the sets between the input station or stations (3) and the output station or stations (4), as a function of the input and/or output rate.

In Claim 6, the claim has been amended as follows:

6. (Amended) Device according to claim 5, [in which] wherein said conveying means (8) take a looped path, said device [including] further comprising means for causing said pressing means (6)

to change over from their product holding configuration to their open configuration, provided, in the direction of progress of the conveying means, between said output station or stations (4) and/or said input station or stations (3) and/or in the area thereof.

In Claim 8, the claim has been amended as follows:

8. (Amended) Device according to claim 5, [in which] further comprising :

[- said] a conveying means (8) [include] comprising a plurality of pods (11), each said pod (11) being capable of accommodating at least one said set,

[- said] a pressing means (6) [are constituted by] being comprised of two carriages (15) sliding in the same, so-called clamping, direction (17), on said pod (11) and [by] means (16) for holding said carriages spaced apart by a given distance.

In Claim 9, the claim has been amended as follows:

9. (Amended) Device according to claim 8, [in which] wherein said means (16) for holding the carriages (15) are [constituted by] comprised of first and second blocking means (22a, 22b) capable of engaging with one another, the first blocking means (22a) being secured to said carriage (15) and said second blocking means (22b) being articulated in relation to said car (11), [as well as by] and locking means (23), borne by the pod (11), said locking means (23) being capable of forcing the engagement of said second blocking means (22b) with said first blocking means (22a).

In Claim 10, the claim has been amended as follows:

10. (Amended) Device according to claim 9, [in which] wherein said means (10) for causing said pressing means (6) to change over from their open configuration to their product holding configuration [are constituted:] comprise:

[- by] at least a first jack (30), secured to an armature (31) fixed in relation to which the pods (11) travel, said first jack or jacks (30) being capable of acting upon said locking means (23) to disengage said first and second blocking means (22a, 22b) and leave them free in relation to one another, and

[-] second jacks (32) secured to said fixed armature (31), said second jacks (32) being capable of causing said carriages (15) to slide in said clamping direction (17) between said open configuration and said product holding configuration.

In Claim 11, the claim has been amended as follows:

11. (Amended) Device according to claim 10, [including] further comprising means (36) for adapting said product holding configuration.

In Claim 12, the claim has been amended as follows:

12. (Amended) Device according to claim 11, [in which] wherein said means (36) for adapting the product holding configuration are [constituted by] comprised of stops (37), mobile in relation to said fixed armature (31), said stops (37) being capable of limiting the travel of said second jacks (32) so as to adjust the minimum spacing of said carriages (15).

In Claim 13, the claim has been amended as follows:

13. (Amended) Device according to claim 5, [in which] wherein said ejection means (7) [include] comprise a thrust bearing (44) and means for displacing said stop in a first direction (45), the latter means being [constituted by] comprised of means (46) capable of generating a force in a second direction (47), substantially perpendicular to said first direction (45) and [by] means (48) for transmitting said force, cooperating with said stop (44).

In Claim 14, the claim has been amended as follows:

14. (Amended) Device according to claim 13, [in which] wherein said transmission means (48) are [constituted by] comprised of two arms (49), forming the two equal sides of an isosceles triangle (50) the axis of symmetry of which is defined by said first direction (45), and [by] means for bringing together/separating said arms (49) by deforming said triangle (50) while preserving its characteristics as an isosceles triangle and the orientation of its axis of symmetry.

In Claim 16, the claim has been amended as follows:

16. (Amended) Device according to claim 15, [in which] wherein said means (46) for generating a force are [constituted by] comprised of at least one jack (55) driving, directly or indirectly, said skids (54).

In Claim 17, the claim has been amended as follows:

17. (Amended) Device according to claim 16, [in which] wherein said means (9) for managing an accumulation of sets are [constituted by] comprised of means for varying the length of the path taken by said transport means (8).

In Claim 18, the claim has been amended as follows: